

Testimony on HB 456

February 14, 2011

Mr. Chairman and fellow committee members,

My name is Nancy Nicholson. I am a parent in the Helena School District who supported the successful efforts to approve a Health Education curriculum for Helena which includes sex education. Our school district has an opt out provision for parents who do not want their children to have this information.

This curriculum was passed after many hours and months of input from health professionals, education professionals, parents, and community members. Much of the testimony that we heard from opponents in this process had to do with fear and prejudice.

This bill is an attempt to take away local control of these decisions and to overturn the extensive and thoughtful process followed in Helena – all because a vocal minority did not like the result.

The purpose of sex education is to provide children with age appropriate and factual information about their bodies and their development so that they can make informed decisions for themselves as they grow and mature. We do not want the state overturning this local decision.

This bill also targets Planned Parenthood, an organization that provides many services, including health education, contraception, prenatal screening, counseling, and others. Abortion has never been their main reason for existence and they work hard to help prevent it by helping women take charge of their reproductive lives.

So, this bill is attempting to take away local control.

This bill is attempting to exclude health professionals from our schools.

And this bill is attempting to promote acceptance of fear, prejudice, and intolerance cloaked in religiosity.

We do not want this for our community and we do not want this for our state.
Please vote against HB 456.